

"SHUCKTOWN"
South Spring Mill Road
Villanova
Radnor Township
Delaware County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-195

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
120 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

"CHUCKSWOOD"

Street Address: South Spring Mill Road, Villanova, Radnor Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Mrs. Charles C. Harrison, Jr., address above

Present Occupant: Owner

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement of Significance: One of the better Federal period brick houses (has outstanding interior architectural detail) in Radnor Township.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: James Hunter, Jr., from 1807-1849; his widow, Margaret (Benedict) Hunter, from 1849-1865; the widow and heirs of Hunter's nephew Maskell Cochran Ewing, after 1865; sold 1902 by Ewing family to Thomas Paton; then sold to John H. Packard; 1914 acquired by Charles C. Harrison, Jr., whose widow is owner today.
2. Date of erection: Date stone is 1807, but it appears that the center hall section of house (with dining and service area in basement) was a few years older; large parlor and dining room added on south end in 1807. All interior decoration and trim is identical in all rooms, hence probably was installed in 1807; the outside, fan-lighted door and thick exterior wall, which are now interior wall of parlor, definitely indicate the two periods of building. Word "original" used in this report means 1807 date.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers etc.: James Hunter, Jr., was a wealthy, widely-read Philadelphia lawyer, who may have given his own ideas to a local builder, probably Samuel Morgan, who erected Hunter's large barn in 1804 (see report on Woodstock Barn). An architect from Philadelphia could, however, easily have been employed.
4. Original plans, construction etc.: No information
5. Notes on alterations and additions: About 1880 dormers were added to third floor front and rear and the middle

window on first floor west facade made into wooden bay on exterior. About 1902 a small wing was put on house at west-south corner (the 1807 windows in parlor and bedroom above at this corner were made into doorways into it); this contained the dining room at that time and the 1807 dining room was an additional parlor.

In 1925 the detached brick nineteenth century stable was enlarged by Arthur Brockie, architect.

In 1946 architect Walter Durham constructed the present modern wing on the east side (containing service on first floor and bedrooms above), the east outside door became inside connecting door to this wing, from stairhall; and Durham installed one new bath on second floor, and removed third floor front dormers.

6. Important old views and references: One photograph of c. 1860 attached herewith; a number of other photographs after alterations of c. 1880 belong to Mrs. Thornton Oakley, Villanova, Pa., copy of one in Radnor Historical Society, Wayne, Pa.

Several years ago Mrs. Charles C. Harrison, Jr., had Photocrafters of Philadelphia prepare four copies of a photographic history of the house and its furnishings, The Chuckswood Book; these are owned by members of the family.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: James Hunter, Jr. (1772-1849), who built the house, was a member of the Philadelphia bar and of the First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry, 1798-1810. His wife, Margaret (Benedict) Hunter (1791-1865) was a sister-in-law of Eliphalet Nott, American educator and college president, and aunt of the wife of Bishop Alonzo Potter (see DAB), all of whom were often guests here during the Hunters' summer residence (they had a Philadelphia Walnut Street townhouse for winters).

Tenants at Chuckswood in the 1860's included Judge J. I. Clark Hare of Philadelphia, and in the 1870's Adolph Borie (1809-1880), Grant's Secretary of the Navy (see DAB).

For fuller history of the house, its owners and tenants, see Francis James Dallett, "The Story of Woodstock," The Bulletin of Radnor Historical Society, Volume I, No. 8 (Spring, 1958), pp. 3-11.

- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None

Prepared by F. J. Dallett Date June 1958
For Radnor Historical Society

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This fine Federal style brick house has interesting interior architectural detail.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent; well maintained as private residence

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: No information
2. Foundations: Fieldstone
3. Wall construction: Brick, original on north and south (Flemish bond) walls of old section, modern in part on west wall of old section; modern wing of brick extends on east, set back from front facade so original front facade is unbroken.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads etc.: No information
5. Chimneys: Four, of brick, all original. Chimney rising from first floor powder room is used for oil burner; others in use for open fires.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original wooden panelled entrance door with side lights and fan light; original door at end of stairhall; others in 1946 wing are modern. Within the house at the end of the center hall, opposite entrance door, is what appears to be the pre-1807 outside doorway with shuttered side lights and fan light.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Large panes, twelve lights, sash. Original on north wall, largely original on south wall; original on west wall, except for drawing room window and bedroom window above at south corner. Windows in wing all modern.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, slate shingles. There is a frame porch on south end of house, running length of old section, which has a pink plastic roof at the west end and a frame roof - with glass sides - at east end.

- b. Cornice, eaves: Bracketed cornice of front extends along sides and rear and runs up gable end on roof line on west wall (in peak of which is date stone "JH 1807"); from c. 1860 photograph it would appear this is a later, heavier cornice in "Colonial" style than the one originally installed.
- c. Dormers: Two on third floor rear (c. 1880). The two on third floor front also installed c. 1880 were removed by present owner in 1946.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans:

First Floor: Wide center hall with two main rooms (library, powder room) off it - all original; also two main rooms at rear (parlor, dining room) - all original; kitchen wing in present form dates from 1946, although walls are of c. 1880.

Second Floor: Four original master bedrooms, two baths; four bedrooms and one bath in c. 1880 wing (form on this floor largely unchanged in 1946 alterations).

Attic floor: Three bedrooms with windows, three without; one bath (original form and arrangement changed c. 1880 and 1946).

Basement floor: The pre-1914 dining room (fireplace), kitchen of pre-1914 period, hall, two other rooms.

- 2. Stairways: Open circular stairway, original, in hall off dining room; riser ends decorated with motifs in applied zinc, very unusual. Backstairs added 1946.
- 3. Flooring: No information
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted over.
- 5. Doorways and doors: All window and door lintels decorated with cornflower at corners (same design repeated in marble mantels). Archway at foot of stairs has wooden pilasters and is embellished with decorative architectural treatment.
- 6. Trim: Cornices in all downstairs rooms. Panelling below heavy chair rail in parlor.
- 7. Hardware: Some original, including brackets in archway at foot of stairs used for pulleys operating curtains which once hung here to keep warm air from rising up stairway.
- 8. Lighting: Electricity

9. Heating: Central heating. Four fireplaces on first floor; four on second floor. Two mantels are black and white marble, one black and gray marble, fluted pilasters and cornflower corner decoration, in original condition.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Protected, wooded setting at front, open fields at rear; on high ground. Front of building faces north by northeast.
2. Enclosures: None
3. Outbuildings: Brickstable of nineteenth century (undoubtedly partly original) was enlarged in 1925; now abandoned and falling down. Garage build under house at east wing in 1946.
4. Walks, driveways etc.: None of interest
5. Landscaping, gardens etc.: Flower gardens, fine shrubs and trees, well tended.

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